

Eye on Sports

Lion's Eye Editorial: Dissecting the McNabb Trade



Mike Shanahan and Donovan McNabb
(Photo Courtesy of sports.yahoo.com)

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I ask you to imagine being a fan of a random NFL team. With the draft coming up in two short weeks, you have a chance to take a quarterback. The city has been starved of a football championship since the 1960's. Now you will draft this quarterback. This player will pass for over 30,000 yards, 200 touchdowns, and set every major franchise passing record. The team will go to five championship games and one Super Bowl. ALL NFL teams would jump at this. This is what Philadelphia received when they drafted a certain player second overall in 1999. Yet from the day he arrived to thunderous boo's, Philadelphia was never truly happy with Donovan McNabb. The city of Brotherly Love never accepted the man expected to lead them to the promised land. And why is this? Did McNabb not win enough? He won 99 games in 11 years and took the franchise to success not seen since the days of Chuck Bednarik. Maybe it was that he didn't try hard enough. After all, in the early 2000's he only accounted for 75% of all of the Eagles' offense. Perhaps he should've done more. The inability of the city of Philadelphia to fully appreciate Donovan McNabb is appalling.

Thus when the trade rumors were opened at the beginning of the NFL offseason, head coach Andy Reid, one of the few loyal to McNabb, stated not once, but twice that Donovan was "his quarterback". The majority of Philadelphia sided against McNabb, stating that it was time to "move on" even though he had brought the franchise nothing but unparalleled success. Yet President Joe Banner and General Manager Howard Roseman headed into the offseason with an unusual problem. All three quarterbacks on the roster: McNabb, Michael Vick, and Kevin Kolb were entering the last year of their contracts. So of course the wonderful management of Philadelphia decided to retain Vick (who was due a \$5 million roster bonus) and Kolb and ship McNabb to the Washington Redskins for a second round pick (37th overall) and a 3rd or 4th round pick in 2011. Instead of keeping a quarterback who played 80% of the snaps in 2009, the franchise is banking on a former convicted felon who played all of 40 plays in 2009 and a quarterback who came from Conference USA to the pros and has started all of one game, against the decrepit Kansas City Chiefs. On top of that, McNabb's 11 years of experience

will be sorely missed. The rest of the offense averages age 24, and the play-makers: wide receivers DeSean Jackson and Jeremy Maclin, running back LeSean McCoy, tight end Brent Celek, and Kolb have a total of 10 years experience in the league.

This trade of McNabb to a division rival and the combined experience of the new offense means that the Eagles are headed for rocky roads as opposed to happy trails. Now the team will meet him twice a year in a Redskins uniform, and he will be ready to prove he has something left. And when McNabb is on point, there are still few in the league better under center. On top of that Kolb is going to need at least a season to get a grip on running a top flight franchise. In the NFC East you don't have that luxury. No, thanks to our renegade feelings toward our veteran superstar, we have relegated our Philadelphia Eagles franchise to the bottom of the division. At least this year. There may yet be some hope for the Eagles. Kolb has the makings of a top flight quarterback, and in a year or two, when McNabb is 35, would have been better prepared to take the reins, as the rest of the offense would have the experience to support him. At that point McNabb would have very little left. Instead he is at the end of his prime and going to Washington to work with Mike Shanahan, who coached John Elway to two Super Bowls in the twilight of his career. Now he is in a similar situation with McNabb.

So I say this. Thank you McNabb, thank you for your services to the franchise, the city, and the fans. You were never fully appreciated, and this trade may haunt the team for the next few years as you team with Shanahan on a now loaded Washington squad. And thank you to Eagles management. You traded one of the most polarizing and talented players in franchise history to a division rival who will be coming back with a vengeance at least twice a year. Also, you have left the offense at an inexperienced and depleted level at the most vital of positions, quarterback. In time, this trade may benefit the Eagles, but they traded the best of three available players, not to mention the franchise cornerstone, for bits and pieces. So look to the future Philly fans, because the now is relying on a wing and a prayer.

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In modern day sports, it is extremely rare for a player to stay in one city for over ten seasons, even more so for a player that has not won a championship for his respective city. It just doesn't happen.

McNabb has just completed his eleventh with the Eagles, and still the city of Philadelphia remains championship less. Sure, he did take us to five NFC championship games, and one Super Bowl, but at the end of the day, there have been no Lombardi Trophies hoisted by the Eagles and no parades down Broad Street. For McNabb, his reign in Philadelphia has rightfully ended.

Call it what you want, but a real Philadelphia sports fan is about results, and nothing else and results have not been McNabb's strong point. Sure he has kept the Eagles competitive for years, but what does that matter if he can't win the "big one".

Now, this is not a knock against his personal success. Any avid sports fan knows about McNabb's numbers and the team's statistical success with #5 behind center. This isn't about his personal success or his passes that hit the shins of Eagle's wide outs. This is about a changing of the guard for the Eagles organization, a new era.

McNabb had to see it coming. The offense around him has done a complete makeover the past few years, and it was getting younger. Much younger. Heck, even Brian Westbrook was let go. Whether the Eagles and fans alike realize it, the team is rebuilding.

The Eagles are trying to accomplish something that they have been doing well for the past few years, which is rebuilding while staying competitive. A difficult task that the Eagles have been able to manage, so far. Aside from the offense being made over, the defense has been doing the same. Dawkins was let go last year, and he was followed by Lito Sheppard and Sheldon Brown. But let's focus on McNabb. The man has shown us time and time again of what he is capable of. He will continually put up

his numbers, and will continually be the professional that he has been for years, but he is not a proven leader that can be depended upon with the game on the line. At this point in his career, two minute drills will never be his forte and his accuracy will remain average. McNabb is what he is.

With all that said and done, he was not good enough to win Philadelphia a Super Bowl.

Yeah, I said it. Sounds tough, but it's the truth.

However, that guy we drafted a few years back in the second round, he still has potential. Kevin Kolb's real career has yet to begin, which means the sky is the limit for this young quarterback. He could very well be the one to deliver the city its first football championship since 1960.

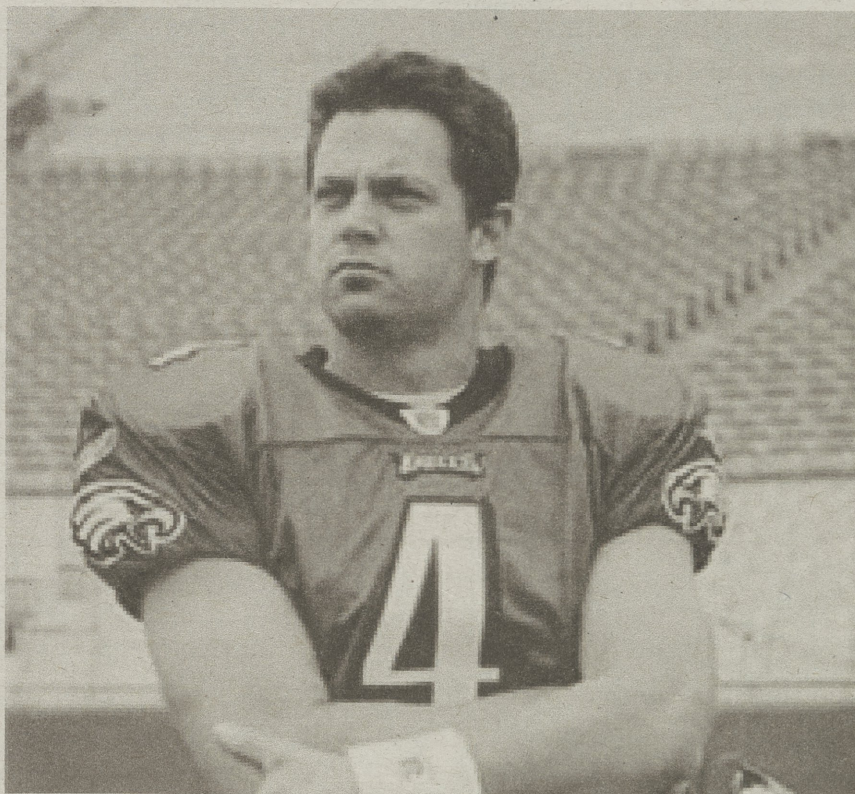
But on the flip side, he could be the farthest thing from it. We just don't know. Much like the situation with Brett Favre and Aaron Rodgers in Green Bay.

Every great quarterback started out as a backup and its Kolb's turn to show what he can do over the course of the next few seasons.

And that's my point about the whole situation. Philadelphia knows what McNabb is and isn't capable of, but the same could not be said about Kevin Kolb. Let us go 8-8 for the next few seasons or so, it's called rebuilding, something every team goes through. As long as Kolb and the team are improving in the process, let's embrace it. Over the next few years, Philadelphia sports fans will be able to watch the team grow with one another and develop themselves into a forceful and talented team.

As for McNabb, he has given everything he's got, and for that he will always be respected in Philadelphia. But the NFL (and any sport for that matter) is a business, and sometimes the guy you loved and followed for years has to be replaced by somebody younger with potential.

For the long term, this was a move that the Eagles had to make.



Kevin Kolb will take over as Eagles' quarterback next season
(Photo Courtesy of sports.yahoo.com)